

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A retractor comprising:
a shaft; and
an inflatable bladder disposed at an end of the shaft,
wherein a portion of the bladder comprises a rigid surface.
2. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the bladder
comprises at least two rigid surfaces which are connected by regions
having differing degrees of resistance to straightening and flexing.
3. The retractor of claim 2, wherein the bladder has as
an accordion structure.
4. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable
bladder does not stretch when fully inflated.
5. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable
bladder operates at inflation pressures from 10 mmHg to 1000 mmHg.
6. The retractor of claim 5, wherein the inflatable
bladder operates at inflation pressures from 100 mmHg to 1000 mmHg.
7. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the shaft is rigid.
8. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the shaft is
flexible.

9. The retractor of claim 1, further comprising a cannula having a passage which receives the shaft to deploy the bladder at a target site in tissue.

10. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable bladder has a non-uniform shape.

11. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the inflatable shape has a shape selected from the group consisting of circular, oval, eccentric, oblong, conical, wedge-shaped, V-shaped, and multiple lobes.

12. The retractor of claim 1, wherein the rigid surface comprises a plate or filament.

13. The retractor of claim 12, wherein the plates or filaments are disposed about the periphery of the bladder.

14. The retractor of claim 1, further comprising additional inflatable bladders on the shaft.

15. The retractor of claim 14, wherein the additional inflatable bladders are separately inflatable.